

Story 927 (1981 Tapes 6, 7) Narrator: Ali Çiftçi, farmer

Location: Çıkırıkçı village,
Sarıkaya kaza, Yozgat
Province

Date: June 1981

Blood Castle

Once in the time of the Prophet there was a rumor in the coffeehouses that the son of Sayidün Ubbad,¹ a very rich man, was soon to have his ritual circumcision.^{Thurfa} This rumor was correct, and soon everyone received invitations to attend the circumcision feast. Caliph Ali^{Thurfa} was among those invited, but the invitation worried him. Caliph Ali was a very poor man, and thus he would be unable to take the boy a suitably valuable gift for the occasion.

In the evening of the day he had received the invitation, Caliph Ali sat before the fireplace in deep thought. Noticing this, his wife said, "Hey, Caliph Ali, you seem to have a

¹Two native Turkish translators heard slightly different names here. Ahmet Uysal heard the name as given in the text here. Necibe Ertas heard Sayidi Nukbat. Both because Ahmet Uysal was present at the taping and because he has known the narrator personally for several years, we have used the name as he heard it.

²If Ali was too poor to buy a suitable circumcision present, then he was not yet Caliph. Because his fame derived from his being Caliph at a later time, he is often referred to as Caliph Ali.

Story 927

problem. Are you ill? What are you thinking about in such a solemn way?"

"Yes, I have a problem, but it is more important than being ill.

"What is it?"

"Well, as you know, Sayidün Ubbad belongs to a very old and very well-known family in Medina.³ He will soon give a sumptuous feast in celebration of his son's circumcision, and I have received an invitation to that feast. Others can afford to give expensive gifts to his son, but I am too poor to be able to buy a gift of sufficient value for such a person. I shall be humiliated in the presence of my friends."

His wife, Fatma,⁴ said to him, "Oh, Caliph Ali, don't worry! Don't be harsh with yourself. I have a piece of jewelry which was left to me by my mother. I can give that to you, and you can then take it as a gift to Sayidün Ubbad's son's circumcision feast as a present."

But Caliph Ali did not accept that offer. He said, "Oh, Fatma, I am afraid of what God might think of that. I cannot take your mother's jewelry, something which had been given to

³This is at a very early moment in Islamic history. To escape threatened assassination, Mohammed and his closest companions and relatives had fled Mecca in 622 and had taken refuge at Yathrib, later known as Medina, the City of the Prophet.

⁴Her name was Fatima, but Fatma is a common Turkish shortening of the name.

Story 927

you as a memento. I cannot give that as a present. Whatever I give Sayidün Ubbad's son must be taken with the power of my sword from the possession of an infidel." *Shughat*

Until that time, Caliph Ali had never gone to bed with his clothes on, but that night he retired still wearing his everyday garments. After Fatma had fallen asleep, he arose again, took his sword off the wall, and went downstairs. Saddling his horse, a broken-down nag, he mounted quickly and departed from the city at once in order to prevent his family's knowing in what direction he went. Now that we know that Caliph Ali was on his way, let us have some information about what was going on at his home.

When Fatma awoke, she saw at once that her husband was no longer with her. Lighting lamps, she went downstairs and there discovered that her husband, his nag,⁵ and his sword were gone. Realizing that he had gone without saying a word to anyone in the family, Fatma began to cry. She cried so loudly that their two sons, Hasan and Hüseyin, also awoke. They asked her, "Why are you crying, Mother?"

"Why shouldn't I cry? Your father, Caliph Ali, left last night, and I do not know where he has gone. He went without

⁵ She uses the name Düldül *Shughat* for Ali's horse. The word düldül is a humorous term for a broken-down nag. This particular düldül became so famous that the word was capitalized and used as a proper name for it. Düldül is one of the great personalized horses of Islamic legend.

Story 927

telling us. That is the reason that I am crying."

When the children heard their mother's words, they too began to cry, and they cried like baby birds with broken wings. Fatma then forgot her own crying and tried to comfort her sons. She had a maid named Fettah⁶ whom she then called to her. She said to her, "Fettah, take Hasan and Hüseyin by the hand and lead them to their grandfather,⁷ who is at the mescit.⁸ Tell him that Imam⁹ Ali is missing, that he disappeared last night."

Holding Hasan and Hüseyin by the hand, Fettah went to the mescit and waited outside the door until Prophet Mohammed had finished praying. Then she entered the building and greeted him with great respect. Handing over Hasan and Hüseyin to him, she said, "Imam Ali has been missing since last night, and no one knows where he went. That is why the children are crying."

When Prophet Mohammed heard this, he turned to those in the mescit and said, "Friends, which way did Imam Ali go?"

⁶ Again, the two translators of this tale heard different names for this servant woman. Ahmet Uysal heard Fettah; Necibe Ertas heard Care-Hattâ.

⁷ Fatima was the daughter of Mohammed. The grandfather of the children was, therefore, the Prophet Mohammed.

⁸ A mescit is a small, sometimes private mosque. A wealthy estate might have a mescit. The term is thus comparable in some ways to the Christian term chapel.

⁹ An imam is the leader of prayer services in a mosque.

Mohammed
12, 14, 16
19, 22, 25

Story 927

did he go? What could have been the reason? Is there anyone here who has any news from him?"

Right away a man named Haliti Velit stepped from the group and said, "O beloved Prophet Mohammed, if you will let me do so, I should like to follow Imam Ali's tracks. I shall if he dies. I'll stay with him, wherever he is. I'll bring back news of him, dead or alive." Prophet Mohammed gave permission to Haliti Velit to search for Caliph Ali

Let us see now what Caliph Ali was doing. After traveling for three days and three nights, he passed over a large mountain. On the other side of that mountain was a plain that seemed endless, and on that plain there was grazing a mixed herd of sheep, camels, and cows. Caliph Ali said to himself, "Yes, I have found them." Continuing on down the slope to the plain, he came to a fountain beside a tree. Releasing Düldül to graze, Ali said to himself, "I shall invite the people here to become believers in God. If they accept this invitation, all will go well for them, but if they reject it, I shall put them all to the sword and take this large herd as a present for the son of Sayidün Ubbad."

While Caliph Ali was thinking in this manner, he saw a servant girl coming toward the fountain with two copper buckets to get water. When the girl saw Caliph Ali by the fountain, she was frightened and stopped coming. Caliph Ali then leaned

Story 927

on the handle of his sword and arose. "Don't be afraid," he said. "I shall not harm you. Come and get your water."

After she had greeted Caliph Ali and he had returned her greetings, she started to fill her water buckets. As she did so, she asked, "Where did you come from? You look like a stranger."

"I came from Medina."

"Which family in Medina do you belong to?"

"I am a member of the Hatip family."

"Who are the Hatips?"

"They are the sons of Muttalib."¹⁰

"I have heard that a very ^{Mohammed} great person has arisen among the tribe of Muttalib. Is that true?"

Caliph Ali concluded from her remark that this girl was ready to accept the existence of God. He then told her all he knew about God and about the Prophet Mohammed. The girl then confessed her faith in God by reciting the testimonial statement,¹¹ and she became a Moslem.

Caliph Ali then asked her, "Who are you?"

"I am a servant of the tribal chief."

¹⁰ Mohammed was the son of Abdallah ibn Abd-al-Muttalib. Ali was the son of Abu Talib, Mohammed's uncle.

¹¹ The expression used here by the narrator was Kelimeyi Şahadet.

Story 927

"Go and tell your master and all his people that if they accept the existence of God, all will go well for them. If they do not, I shall put all of them to the sword and take all of their goods and animals to Medina."

The girl went to her master and repeated all that Caliph Ali had said to her. When the tribal chief heard this ultimatum, he was frightened. He said, "Alas, I shall be killed! How many soldiers does he have?" He thought that Caliph Ali must have many troops at his command.

The girl servant answered, "There are no soldiers there. There are only he, his sword, and his horse."

This tribal chief had a vizier who was 150 years old. He now consulted this wise vizier. Calling him, the chief asked, "How can I escape the sword of this stranger?"

The vizier gave the following advice to the tribal chief: "If you want to escape his sword, send this stranger food and water. He cannot be harmful to you after he has eaten your food and drunk your water. He cannot then be an enemy to you."

The chief immediately sent food to Caliph Ali. When the servant girl took it to him, Caliph Ali said, "If this had brought by anyone else, I should not have eaten and drunk it. But because you have become a Moslem, I trust you." Inasmuch as he was very hungry and thirsty, he ate the food and drank the water. After he and the girl had said farewell to each

Story 927

other, he added, "Go and tell your master now that he has escaped from my sword." He then mounted his horse and left.

After a while he came upon a shepherd herding his flock, sighing deeply, and saying, "Ah!" over and over again.

Coming closer to the shepherd, Caliph Ali asked him, "What is your name?"

"My name is Ömer."

"Why are you walking about sighing deeply and saying sadly, 'Ah!'"?

"A year ago I had a ^{day 25} dream in which I saw Prophet Mohammed. He spoke to me and I believed in what he said. I accepted his faith and became a Moslem. When some people of my village learned that I had become a Moslem, they reported this to Katayan, our chief. He called me to him and said, 'Why did you accept the religion of the Prophet Mohammed? You and he are mountains apart.¹² If I ever hear you repeat his name even once more, I shall kill you for the sake of Lati Menet.'¹³

¹²The figure of speech here refers not to geographical separation but to ideological difference.

¹³The narrator has here combined the names of two members of a pre-Islamic triad of goddesses: Lat, Manat, and Uzza. They were considered the main obstacles to the establishing of Islam. They were said to be the daughters of God and were widely worshiped throughout the Arab Middle East. Mohammed tried to placate rich merchants of Mecca by including the triad in the Koran as intercessors, but later, claiming that Satan had inserted them in the revelation, withdrew all concerning them except their names.--See Chapter 53, verses 19-20

Story 927

Because I insisted on keeping my faith, he imprisoned me in a dark dungeon for a year, and then he released me but sent me out here alone to tend his flocks. When he sent me here, he repeated,

17 19 Ah,
if I could see his face just once more before I die, I would be happy and would cease worrying."

Caliph Ali replied, "Don't worry any more, Ömer. If I survive this experience, and if God permits, I shall return and take you to Medina, where you will be near the Prophet Mohammed." Saying this, Caliph Ali left Ömer and continued on his way.

Tracking Caliph Ali for some time, Haliti Velit reached the territory of the tribal chief whose servant girl had brought Ali food and water. She also brought food and water to Haliti Velit and showed him the direction Caliph Ali had taken from there.

After Haliti Velit had ridden two more days, following Caliph Ali's tracks, he too came upon Ömer. Ömer was still herding sheep and still saying, "Ah!" with deep sadness in voice. Haliti Velit dismounted and embraced Ömer heartily, saying, "O Ömer, you did very well to accept the existence of God. If we survive, and if God permits, we shall take you

Story 927

with us to a place where you will be reunited with Prophet Mohammed." They then bade each other farewell, and Haliti Velit then continued his pursuit of Caliph Ali.

By that time Caliph Ali had crossed another mountain and come out upon a large meadow through which ran a small river. Near the river were five or six tents. Very hungry and thirsty Caliph Ali went to the river and drank some of its water. After doing so, he found, to his surprise, that the water not only quenched his thirst but also satisfied his hunger. He felt as if he had eaten a large quantity of bread. All his fatigue had also disappeared

Letting his horse Düldül rest, Caliph Ali grasped his sword Zülfikar¹⁴ and walked toward the tents. As he got close to the first tent, he heard two men inside talking. One man said to the other, "Tell me, is there from Mağrib to Maşrik¹⁵ a man brave enough to resist me?"

The other man in the tent did not answer at first, but after the speaker had asked the same question three times,

¹⁴This double-tipped sword of Ali enabled him to win almost miraculous victories. Like Arthur's Excalibur, it was one of the few personalized and named legendary swords.

¹⁵Mağrib means West and Maşrik means East. Many Turkish peasants envision Mağrib as a place farthest west and Maşrik as the place farthest east--mythical places. Mağrib is often a term used for Moslem North Africa, which is west of the central Moslem lands; sometimes the term Mağrib is applied only to Morocco, the farthest west of these Moslem lands.

Story 927

he said, "If you will promise that you will not kill me for what I say, I shall answer your question."

"I shall not harm you in any way. I promise that in the name of Lati Menet."

Having received this promise, the previously silent man said, "There is a family in the city of Medina which is named Rahim Muttalib. A very great man called Prophet Mohammed belongs to that family. The Prophet has a son-in-law, who is at the same time his cousin, named Caliph Ali. This Ali is a very brave and strong man. No living thing in the whole world can escape his hands. There is a great distance between us here and Caliph Ali--it might take forty days to walk there--but if you call, saying, 'Come, Ali, come ' he will be here in a minute."

At that very moment Caliph Ali lifted up the tent flap with his sword and entered the tent. The brave man, whose name was Ebül Muslim, stood up and asked, "What kind of person are you? How dare you enter my tent that way without my knowing you?"

Caliph Ali answered, "You were just now talking about a certain man. Who was he?"

Ebül Muslim understood from that that the stranger was Caliph Ali, and he said, "You are Caliph Ali. Let us make an agreement. Let us wrestle, and then let the loser, whichever

Story 927

of us it may be, accept the religious faith of the winner. Will you agree to that?"

Waiting
Caliph Ali accepted this arrangement, and the two men advanced upon each other. Ebül Muslim tried three or four times to move Caliph Ali, but he could not move him even an inch. When Caliph Ali's turn came, he grasped Ebül Muslim as a falcon holds a starling, threw him to the ground in less than a minute, and sat upon his chest. He then said, "O Ebül Muslim, will you accept my religion?"

Answer
"Of course, Caliph Ali, for my promise was made with the words of a man. Tell me how to say the testimonial statement of faith, for I now wish to become a Moslem.

After he had made his statement of faith, Ebül Muslim and Caliph Ali embraced each other. Ebül Muslim then said, "O Ali, why are you here in this area? What reason could have brought you here?"

told him the whole story from the beginning to the end. "There is in Medina a very wealthy person named Sayidün Ubbad. His son will soon have his ritual circumcision, and Sayidün Ubbad has sent invitations to almost everyone to attend the feast following the circumcision. Most of the guests will be wealthy people who can afford to give the boy expensive presents, but I am too poor to be able to take a suitable gift therefore decided to plunder infidels and take from them a

gift by the power of my sword."

"O Ali, give up that idea and forget that you ever had it. I have a great amount of gold and pearls, as well as other kinds of jewels. I can give them all to you so that you can present gifts to both Sayidün Ubbad and his son. This will enable us to go to Medina sooner to see the Prophet Mohammed.

But Caliph Ali refused to accept this offer. He said to Ebül Muslim, "I am very pleased to hear you make this offer. You are a very loyal Moslem. However, I promised myself to get this gift from infidels with the strength of my sword. If you wish to help me, you can direct me to a rich fortress now held by infidels.

Ebül Muslim thought and thought about this and then said, "There is a ²¹⁻³⁹fortress which is known as Blood ²¹⁻³⁹Castle. It takes forty days to get there, but after going for twenty days one encounters a flood of bloody water that makes it almost impossible to continue. There is a passage that approaches the fortress from the opposite direction and thus avoids most of the bloody flood, but the entrance to that passage, in the city of a certain shah, is reached in such a roundabout way that the journey there takes almost a year and a half. let us abandon the idea of attacking this fortress. No matter which route you take, the blood flood may overwhelm you."

"You just show me the way there," said Caliph Ali.

Story 927

can pass through the bloody water, I shall capture that fortress; if I cannot get through the bloody flood, I shall return."

Both men climbed the nearby mountain, and when they reached the peak, Ebül Muslim said, "Can you see the road lies straight ahead of us from here? Never depart from that road, for it leads directly to the bloody waters."

After they had bade each other farewell, Caliph Ali said, "O Ebül Muslim, wait ten days for me. Then, if I do not return, take your people and go to Medina. Give my greetings to the Prophet Mohammed, to my friends there, and to my wife, Fatma. Kiss my sons, Hasan and Hüseyin, for Ebül Muslim was by now crying, and so was Caliph Ali, though he did not wish to show his tears. Instead, he started off at once in the direction of the waters of blood.

While this was taking place, Haliti Velit was still trying to overtake Caliph Ali. After saying farewell to the servant of the tribal chief, he followed Ali's track along a very dusty road for three more days and nights. He came to a high mountain, but it was almost impossible to climb it in the heavy sandstorm that had sprung up. He was very hungry and thirsty, and his horse was too weary to carry him across the mountain of Ala.¹⁶ Haliti Velit said to his horse, "Oh dear

¹⁶There were many mountains in Turkish history that included the letters ala, and there may also have been some in

Story 927

horse, if I do not leave you here, I shall die here with you. Please give your blessing to me and do not hold it against me in the next world."¹⁷

The poor horse inclined its head in agreement, and the tears pouring from its eyes¹⁸ indicated that it had understood Haliti Velit's words. Haliti Velit could not bear to see his horse weep, and like a compassionate mother, he raised the horse to his back and struggled up the mountain with it. After reaching the peak, the two of them walked very slowly down the other side. At the foot of that mountain they came upon the meadow with the river running through it, where Caliph Ali had seen the tents of Ebül Muslim. Going to the edge of the river, both Haliti Velit and his horse drank plentifully of its waters and were wonderfully refreshed. They felt as if they had eaten a great amount of food, and they were no

Arabian history. In modern Turkey Ala Mountain, just north of Adana, is the highest peak in the Taurus chain. In the homeland of the Turks in Central Asia is the Talas Ala range. The Syr Darya river rises in this range east of Tashkent. This mountain range is mentioned several times in the 10th-century Turkish epic, The Book of Dede Korkut.

¹⁷Moslems are greatly concerned that their personal relationships do not leave them indebted in any way to others lest this indebtedness bear damaging testimony against them on Judgment Day.

¹⁸Among other legendary horses reported to have wept were Ruksh, the horse of Sohrab (Sohrab and Rustum, lines 735-736), and the horse of Achilles, mourning for Patroclus (Iliad, XVII, 426-440, especially 437ff.)

Haliti Velit

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Story 927

longer tired. They then encountered Ebül Muslim, who asked, "Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

Haliti Velit answered, "I came from Medina, and my name is Haliti Velit."

"Why did you come here?"

"I am searching for Caliph Ali."

When Ebül Muslim heard Caliph Ali's name, he grew excited and said, "Oh, yes, yes I became a Moslem in his presence. Come, my friend, and stay here; rest here. Caliph has gone to Blood Castle. As he departed, he said to

'If I can get past the bloody waters before the castle, I shall conquer that fortress; if I cannot get through these waters, I shall return. If he has not returned after ten days, we shall go to the waters of blood to search for Caliph

dead or alive." --We shall now leave these two there awaiting the return of Caliph Ali and take a look at Caliph Ali himself

After traveling for several days and nights, he met an old man, perhaps seventy or eighty years old, with a white beard. "Selâmünaleyküm, Ali, and may your journey be propitious."

"Aleykümselâm,"¹⁹ replied Ali, surprised that the old

¹⁹The traditional exchange between Moslems who are strangers to each other: May peace be unto you/ And may peace be unto you also.

Story

man had recognized him.

"O Imam, my name is so-and-so, and I live and worship in such-and-such a cave. In a dream I heard a voice saying, 'Blessed'²⁰ Ali is proceeding toward Blood Castle. When you see him, show him how to cross the bloody waters.' I am ready to do that now."

When Caliph Ali heard this, he rejoiced as much as he might have if he had been given the richest treasure in the world. But after they had gone a way together, Ali felt that the old man had left the correct path. "I think that you are going in the wrong direction," he said.

"No, no, you just follow me and I shall show you the right

They soon reached a fortress called Lak Castle. The old man had deliberately taken Ali to this castle ruled by a man named Tarık Zengi, but as they approached it, the old man suddenly disappeared from Ali's view and appeared before Tarık Zengi, to whom he said, "Why are you still here? Caliph Ali of Medina is approaching, and if you do not make a stand against him, he will kill you and all of your followers."

²⁰ Hazretti Ali are the words of the narrator. In Turkish tales most important religious figures referred to, whether alive or long since dead, are described as Hazretti. It can mean holy or reverend; we have used blessed, the suggestion of which seems about halfway between holy and reverend.

Story 927

Tarık Zengi then said, "Alas, I am as good as dead already! How many troops does he have?"

The old man answered, "Caliph Ali does not have troops. He has only himself, his sword, and his horse.

Tarık Zengi had a cousin named Tamazengi whom he considered strong enough to be equal to 1,000 soldiers. He now called Tamazengi and said to him, "Go out there and bring back our greatest enemy, Caliph Ali, dead or alive

Tamazengi went out through the castle gate and walked slowly toward Caliph Ali. When the distance left between them was about sixteen meters, Tamazengi said to Caliph Ali, "Oh, just look at me Who are you? Why did you come here? I can kill you with a single stroke."

To this, Caliph responded by raising Zülfikar to ear and shouting, "What did you say? I cannot hear you.

When Tamazengi saw Caliph Ali's sword, Zülfikar, he lost all his courage, thinking that Caliph Ali meant to kill him. He retreated immediately into Lak Castle where he said to Tarık Zengi, "I could not get near him. Both Caliph Ali's eyes and those of his horse flashed constantly like terrible lightning. He carried a huge double-tipped sword!"

Very angry at his cousin's cowardice, Tarık Zengi said, "I thought you were a brave man, but here you have proven yourself a coward! I should never have relied upon you!"

Story

Then turning to Tamazengi's brother, Tarazengi, he said, "Go out there and bring back Caliph Ali either dead or alive."

Tarazengi rode out from the castle and attacked Caliph Ali suddenly and without speaking to him. But Caliph Ali parried all his blows very easily. He then called to Tarazengi, "Oh, Infidel, accept the existence of God, for if you do not, I shall kill you!" When Tarazengi now began to swear at Ali and even at God, Caliph Ali could not stand his words. Aiming a mighty blow at him with his sword, he split both Tarazengi and his horse into halves.

Seeing this, Tarık Zengi ordered out all of his troops to attack Caliph Ali at the same time. When Caliph Ali saw them coming forth, he realized that this was now no light matter. Mounting Döldöl, Ali started toward them with a terrifying war whoop so loud that it sounded like thunder. Then Tarık Zengi's soldiers regretted that they were not moles or rats that could find holes in which to hide instead of being human beings. Caliph Ali was able to force all of Tarık Zengi's troops back into the castle in a short time

They locked the gates of the castle, but Caliph Ali immediately began assaulting them in an effort to burst them open. When Tarık Zengi observed this, he thought to himself, "If the religion of this man had not been the right one, he would never have possessed such great power. I shall go and

Story 927

accept his religion, whether or not my tribe follows me in doing so." Going out through the gates, he prostrated himself before Caliph Ali and said, "Give me instructions on the way to accept your faith. If your religion had not been the right one, you would not have been able to achieve all you have singlehandedly."

After Caliph Ali told him how to make the testimonial statement of faith, Tarık Zengi repeated this and thus became a Moslem. When his people heard of his acceptance of Islam, all of Tarık Zengi's followers from the age of seven to the age of seventy were also converted. Then Tarık Zengi asked, "O Caliph Ali, why did you come into this country? It is a great distance from your home." Ali explained his need to win a gift for the son of Sayidün Ubbad and declared his intention of attacking and conquering Blood Castle. When Tarık Zengi heard this, he said, "O Caliph Ali, please abandon your plans. I have much gold and many diamonds, and they all be yours. Take them to Sayidün Ubbad in Medina as a present to him.

Caliph Ali was unable, however, to forsake the promise he had made to himself. "I cannot give up my promise. I take a valuable gift from an infidel through the power of my sword. Just show me the way through the waters of blood to Blood Castle

Story

They showed Ali a passageway over an old almost worn-out bridge. That bridge had been made with the bones of Mucmuluk's legs. Mucmuluk was a son of Adam so very, very tall that he could stand in the deepest ocean and have its waters come only to his knees. He used to catch fish and hold them up close enough to the sun so that they were cooked by its heat, and then he would eat them. That bridge had been made from the bones of his legs after he had died.

Caliph Ali passed over the bloody waters by riding across that bridge, but Döldül had just barely reached the other side when the old bridge collapsed. But now that he was safely across the bloody waters, Caliph Ali was so jubilant that he uttered such a loud shout of challenge that he frightened even himself with it! Along the way between the bridge and Blood Castle there were two magic objects, the one made of cat skulls and the other of dog skulls. When anyone passed along that route, these two magic objects began to cry and howl so loudly that they warned the people of the castle of the approach of an enemy. The warning meant that the bloody waters had been crossed, and that troops should be dispatched to meet the enemy. As soon as Ali heard these magic objects crying and howling, he rushed to them and destroyed them, but by then their loud warnings had been heard at Blood Castle. Four hundred warriors armored in steel were sent out, and they

Story 927

met Caliph Ali about half the distance from the bridge to the castle.

"What is your name?" they asked him.

He gave them a false name: "I am such-and-such a mighty warrior. Whenever I hear of a great ruler, I go to his land and offer to teach his troops the art of war, and with the rewards I receive for this work I provide subsistence for my family. I have heard that you have a great ruler, and it is to him that I am going. If he accepts me, I shall teach his soldiers the art of war. If he does not accept me, then I shall find another ruler who wishes to have my services."

The four hundred warriors took Hazretti Ali to Blood Castle, talking with him along the way. When the Kahkaha Sultan²¹ was informed of his arrival, he gave orders for housing the stranger: "Take him to the guest room where he can rest for a few days

Hazretti Ali was continuously trying to discover a way in which he could capture this castle. After resting for three or five²² days, he was to be taken to the presence of Kahkaha Sultan, whose quarters were at the top of the castle. There was a stairway of 361 steps leading to his quarters. On every step of the stairway there were stationed a sentry

²¹It seems likely that the name of this ruler is as imaginary as his castle.

²²Three or five is a colloquial Turkish expression meaning a few.

Story 927

and a fierce beast. They took Caliph Ali to Kahkaha Sultan's hell and heaven. First they took him to the Treasury. Above the Treasury door was a large board on which a brief account was written in Arabic. Ali saw this board and read the account

"There was once a ruler named Sultan Solomon
This ruler had a teacher named Üstüllah, and one day he said to Üstüllah, 'Oh, my dear teacher, tell me something. After I have gone, who else will come and go from this castle?'

'Teacher Üstüllah said, 'After you many rulers will come and depart, and eventually there will come one named Kahkaha. He will worship the sun himself, but he will force his people to worship him as their god.'

'Oh, dear teacher, who will put an end to his rule?'
"'Caliph Ali, at once the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed, will bring an end to the reign of Kahkaha.'"

At the bottom of the board there had been written in a different hand, "O Caliph Ali, fear not! Commence the battle immediately!"

After Ali had read those words written in Arabic, he was taken to Kahkaha's heaven, where there were many odalisques

Story 927

who acted like houris.²³ One of them moved close to Ali and said softly in Arabic, which the others there could not understand, "Welcome, O Ali!"

Ali answered, also in Arabic, "Don't tell anyone that I am here. How do you know my name?"

The odalisque said, "I went to the treasure room and read the board there written in Arabic. When I heard that you had crossed the bloody waters, I understood that you were the person who would put an end to the reign of Kahkaha. You are Caliph Ali. No one here knows who you are except me. O Caliph Ali, please save us from this infidel Kahkaha."

After visiting Kahkaha's heaven, they took Caliph Ali to Kahkaha's throne room. When Ali entered this room, he cursed Kahkaha silently, so that no one would hear him. Kahkaha showed him a place to sit, and the two of them talked until a noise disturbed their conversation. That noise had to do with Ali indirectly.

It seems that Kahkaha Sultan had heard about the prowess of Caliph Ali, and he had promised his daughter in marriage to anyone who could kill Ali. A certain warrior named Tamruç had assumed responsibility for performing this task. The disturbance in the throne room was caused by some soldiers

²³The Moslem version of female angels who serve as attendants in Paradise.

Story 927

who entered and announced, "Good news, good news, Majesty Tamruç has killed Caliph Ali and brought his head back."

Tamruç then entered with a severed head as large as an asphalt cauldron, threw it on the floor before Kahkaha Sultan, and said, "May your enemy's death bring you long life, Your Majesty.

When Caliph Ali saw the head, he smiled. Kahkaha Sultan noticed this and asked, "Why do you smile?"

Ali answered, "It is nothing much. But I know many people at Medina, and I can assure you that that is not the head of Caliph Ali."

The ruler then said to Tamruç, "Tell us how it came about. How was it that you severed Ali's head?"

Tamruç then gave the following account: "I walked day and night until I reached Medina. Shortly after I arrived there, I came upon Caliph Ali picking dates. When I wounded him with an arrow, he fell from the tree. He arose and we fought for a while until I tricked him and cut off his head

Caliph Ali smiled again, and this time it made Tamruç very angry. "Why are you smiling?" he demanded

Ali answered, "It was not Caliph Ali's head. That is why I am smiling."

Story

No longer able to restrain himself, Tamruç drew his sword to kill Caliph Ali, but Kahkaha Sultan separated them. Caliph Ali then said to the ruler, "Dear Sultan, you can tell which of us is the real man only by observing us in the field. Let us wrestle with each other, and may the better man win."

He went to the field of combat. There Tamruç made a number of attacks on Caliph Ali, but he was unable to knock over his opponent. When Ali made his first rush at Tamruç, he took Tamruç's sword away from him. On the second rush he removed his shield, and on the third rush he took his dagger. Then he said, "Accept the existence of God or I shall kill you!" When Tamruç refused to do that, Caliph Ali cut off his head.

Tamruç had a very powerful brother who said to Ali, "How could you dare to do such a thing as to kill my brother? Now I shall kill you!" But this brother never had a chance, for Ali killed him immediately.

Now, at last, Kahkaha Sultan realized that his greatest enemy, Caliph Ali, was not only alive but also standing before his very nose. When the Sultan ordered 100,000 soldiers to attack Ali, the Caliph became suddenly aware of the seriousness of his situation. He bellowed forth a terrifying roar at least as loud as thunder. It echoed through the mountains and hills until it reached the castle of Tarık Zengi. Ebül

Story

Muslim and Haliti Velit also heard that powerful roar. They spoke simultaneously, both saying, "If Caliph Ali were not in serious trouble, he would never have yelled so loudly. He needs us!" They immediately mounted their horses and rode off in the direction of Blood Castle. Tarık Zengi chose 1,000 strong soldiers and started off in the same direction.

As Ebül Muslim and Haliti Velit were riding along toward the waters of blood, they saw coming in their direction from one side a small army. Ebül Muslim asked, "O Haliti Velit, if they decide to attack us, what can we do? They are very numerous, and we are only two."

Haliti Velit responded, "Don't worry, Ebül Muslim! The great God is always with us. Nothing can happen to us. We can do battle with a whole army, or even with two whole armies!"

But when these two and the mass of troops came closer, they all discovered that they were going upon the same mission. They all arrived at the bloody waters together, but they were unable to cross, for the bridge was now gone.

Soon, however, there came along a man named Alabaca who said that he could help them cross the bloody waters. He said, "Trust me! I know a special passage, for I was sent upon it by Kahkaha Sultan when I was spying for him upon Tarık Zengi's army. I gave information about Tarık Zengi's

army to Kahkaha Sultan, but now that I have accepted the existence of God, I am Kahkaha's enemy and he is mine. I know a place half an hour's ride from here where we can easily ford this flood. It is a place where three-quarters of the water flows underground and only one-quarter flows on the surface. There we shall be able to cross the bloody waters very easily."

They thought about this for a moment, and then Haliti Velit said to Alabaca, "First you will cross the bloody water at that point. If you are able to cross, then we shall be sure that you have not, after all, lied to us, but if you fail to cross, I shall kill you."

Without even the slightest hesitaion, Alabaca rode horse to the ford and crossed the bloody waters safely. Right behind him came Ebül Muslim, Haliti Velit, Tarık Zengi, all of Tarık Zengi's troops. As they rode farther, Caliph Ali's voice was getting closer and closer until they burst upon the scene of battle. There they saw that Caliph Ali had been wounded in seven different places. Taking him from the battlefield, they said to him, "You must rest. If we don't attack them, they will probably not attack us." they gave him food which had been brought by Tarık Zengi from his fortress.

After a week, Caliph Ali had recovered sufficiently to

Story

enter the battlefield again. On his first day in the field he killed forty men himself, and his companions each killed almost as many. When Kahkaha observed this, he realized that it was going to be extremely difficult to kill Caliph Ali, and so he ordered out 400,000 soldiers to attack Caliph Ali and his friends. The battle raged continuously for three days and three nights, and at the end of that time, 195,000 of Kahkaha's troops had been killed, and 150 Moslems had died

he learned how badly the fighting had gone for his forces, Kahkaha fell into great panic. Calling his oldest vizier to his side, he asked this 200-year-old man, "How can I kill Caliph Ali?"

The ancient vizier advised him: "Divide your troops into four groups and then send one group against each of the four Moslem leaders." (As you already know, there were indeed four Moslem leaders: Caliph Ali, Ebül Muslim, Haliti Velti, and Tarık Zengi.) The old vizier then added, "If you cannot separate those leaders, you will not be able to kill them, and if you cannot kill them, then you cannot win the battle."

But Caliph Ali saw how the enemy troops were reorganizing, and he quickly decided what strategy Kahkaha now planned to use. He said to the other three Moslem leaders, "Kahkaha is dividing his forces into four groups, and he will probably

send one group against each of the four of us in order to split us apart. We must not allow ourselves to be separated. We should fight with our backs facing each other."

Kahkaha Sultan again ordered what was left of his 400,000 troops to attack. Again the battle continued without cessation for three days and three nights, and this time 180,000 more of Kahkaha's troops were slain while 150 of the Caliph's supporters had died.

By now, however, Caliph Ali had reached the point where he could no longer bear to see so much slaughter. He rushed with enormous anger and weeping heart at Kahkaha and cornered him. He said to him, "Accept the existence of God, or I shall kill you!"

But Kahkaha did not believe him. He said, "You are not able to kill me. You cannot possibly kill me, for I am God."

When Caliph Ali heard these words, he drew his sword and separated Kahkaha Sultan's head from his body. He then threw the severed head beneath the feet of the soldiers of the castle and said to them, "Oh, poor soldiers, look here! God is now dead, and his head rolls about under your feet. Come, now! If you will accept the existence of God, I shall not harm you." Some accepted Islam. Some did not, but paid a forfeit for their lives.

Caliph Ali ordered that Kahkaha's hell and heaven be

Story 927

destroyed and replaced by new mosques. He left some teachers there to instruct the new converts further in the ways of Islam. He then took the gold, gems, and jewelry with him from the Treasury of the castle and gave these to Sayidün Ubbad and his son as presents.